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DN EXTRA

July 2007

Street life

The fight for independent living goes to No 10

DN EXTRA...

editorial

Acting Editor John Pring
Tel: 020 7619 7326
john.pring@scope.org.uk
News Editor Katharine Quarmby
Tel: 020 7619 7324
katharine.quarmby@scope.org.uk
Design/Production Editor
Jamie Trounce
Sub Editor/Web Manager
Hannah Nemeth
Reporters Paul Carter
Tel: 020 7619 7325
paul.carter@scope.org.uk
Sunil Peck
Tel: 020 7619 7321
sunil.peck@scope.org.uk
Ivy Broadhead
Tel: 020 7619 7115
ivy.broadhead@scope.org.uk
Editorial Assistant
Lucy Howard

advertising

Advertising Manager
Patrick Durham-Matthews
Tel: 020 7619 7336
patrick.durhammatthews@scope.org.uk
Advertising Executive
Manny Singh
Tel: 020 7619 7320
manny.singh@scope.org.uk
Sales Administrative Assistant Suzan Hillman
Tel: 020 7619 7120

marketing

Temporary Marketing Manager
Juliana Uduezue
Tel: 020 7619 7244
juliana.uduezue@scope.org.uk

address

Disability Now, 6 Market Road
London N7 9PW
Editorial: 020 7619 7323
Fax: 020 7619 7331
Textphone: 020 7619 7332
email: editor@disabilitynow.org.uk

subscriptions

FREEPOST RLZU-YJSG-ACBJ,
Disability Now, 800 Guillat Avenue, Kent Science Park,
Sittingbourne ME9 8GU
Tel: 0845 120 7001
email: dnsubs@servicehelpline.co.uk

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New bullying research

BY **SUNIL PECK**

Four out of five of children with a learning difficulty are bullied during or after school, a report has found.

Children between the ages of eight and 19 with a learning difficulty took part in a survey by the charity Mencap.

Nearly 60 per cent of them had been hurt physically by bullies, while more than 75 per cent said that they had been bullied verbally.

Dame Jo Williams, chief executive at Mencap, said that bullying "wrecks lives" by making children with learning difficulties scared to mix and play with other children.

Sir Al Aynsley-Green, children's commissioner for England, said that he was particularly concerned by the bullying of children with a learning difficulty and added: "We must take steps to tackle bullying now and provide children with the appropriate skills, tools and support to give them the confidence to tackle bullying."

Jim Knight, schools minister, added: "We are developing specific advice for schools on tackling bullying of disabled pupils, which will add to what we already provide in our wider bullying guidance. We hope Mencap and various anti-bullying groups and charities will provide their expert input into this."

ROSIE GIBBONS

Disability field honoured

This year's Queen's birthday honours list featured a number of people acknowledged for their services to the field of disability.

Among those recognised was Bob Niven, chief executive of the Disability Rights Commission (DRC), who was awarded a CBE.

He said: "It is of course personally a great privilege to receive this award, but the honour actually marks the huge contribution being made by so many people, disabled and non-disabled alike, in the Disability Rights Commission and in the community more generally."

Kathryn Stone, director of anti-abuse charity Voice UK, received an OBE for her services to people with learning difficulties.

She said: "For me it's recognition of the work of the organisation, and I hope that we can use it to raise the profile of the needs of people with learning disabilities as victims of crime."

Others to receive awards included Sense trustee John Crabtree; Toby Elliott (*above*), chief executive of Combat Stress; Dr Paul Whittaker, artistic director, Music and the Deaf; and Ashok Ghose, chair, Asian People with Disabilities Alliance, who all received OBEs.

On the cover: More than 100 disability activists converged on Whitehall last month to launch a new campaign for a right to independent living.

The Our Lives, Our Choices campaign says all disabled people should have the support they need to lead independent lives.

It backs the independent living bill introduced by Lord (Jack) Ashley in the Lords.

Our Lives, Our Choices is being led by the National Centre for Independent Living (NCIL), with support from disability organisations such as RADAR and Scope and other equality organisations, including the Equal Opportunities Commission and the National Pensioners Convention.

A banner featuring disabled people's experiences of independent living and thoughts about the bill was delivered to 10 Downing Street.

Pictured after the handover are (*from left to right*): Robert Droy, from Southampton Centre for Independent Living; Chris Brace, from RADAR; NCIL director Sue Bott; Andy Rickell, an executive director at Scope; and Scope vice-chair David Hayes.

For a full report on the rally and the campaign launch, see *DN* August.

Picture by Thomas Metzler/Scope

New guidance on rights of disabled parents

BY **IVY BROADHEAD**

Campaigners have welcomed new government guidance* calling on councils not to discriminate against parents with learning difficulties.

Guidelines from the Department of Health state that councils should not "make assumptions" about the capacity of parents with learning difficulties, but work with families to ensure they get the support they need at each stage of life.

Parents with learning difficulties should be provided with information in alternative formats they can understand, and have access to advocacy support where necessary.

Where a child has to be taken into care, they should be able to stay in contact with their family – and their parents receive the help that they need so that their child can return home.

Raymond Johnson, national project manager at People First (Self Advocacy), which is run by and for people with learning difficulties, welcomed the guidance.

He said: "For us it is a case of guilty until proven innocent." He said people with learning difficulties are often assumed to be bad parents.

"People with learning difficulties need equal rights to a family life, including the right to be parents," he added.

**Good practice guidance on working with parents with a learning disability; for a copy, tel: 020 7210 4850, or visit www.dh.gov.uk*

REX FEATURES

Baywatch: A new protest group, Car Park Crusaders, descended on Soho Square in London last week to draw attention to the growing number of non-disabled car drivers who park in disabled bays.

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Government to review abuse guidance

BY PAUL CARTER

The government has announced that it is to review its guidance on the protection of vulnerable adults, following a study by the Department of Health.

The UK Study of Abuse and Neglect, carried out over two years by independent researchers, found that four per cent of the 2,000 older people questioned had been neglected or abused in the last year.

If applied nationally, this total equates to 342,000 people.

The existing guidance, No Secrets, was launched in 2000, and aims to ensure that health, social services and the police work together to protect adults who might be unable to protect themselves from harm or exploitation.

Ivan Lewis, care services minister, said: "Seven years on, and in the light of several serious incidences of adult abuse, it is timely to review this guidance and to consult with other government departments that have an interest in this field.

"New guidance is necessary to reflect the evidence in today's report and respond to the new demographic realities which are affecting our society," he added.

Deborah Kitson, director of the Ann Craft Trust, said: "There is good practice out there, but there is also far too much bad practice. This review gives us a chance to learn what works and use it to stop abuse of vulnerable adults. We welcome it."

Royal reception: The Prince of Wales hosted a reception at Clarence House on 21 June for The National Centre for Young People with Epilepsy (NCYPE). He is pictured talking to NCYPE student Isobel Phillips and manager Martin Watson.

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New rules spark row

BY **PAUL CARTER**

New European Union (EU) rules concerning wheelchair accessible vehicles (WAVs) could lead to increased costs and reduce choice for disabled people, it has been claimed.

Frances Leckie, editor of the website independentliving.co.uk, says some in the industry are concerned the new Wheelchair Vehicle Type Approval (WVTA) regulations may cause difficulties as, in order to achieve WVTA, a wheelchair in which a passenger travels is classified as a seat.

This could mean wheelchairs have to undergo rigorous crash testing before being approved for use in a vehicle.

She said: "If the legislation proceeds as currently framed, it does appear that the advantages of improved trading consistency and enhanced safety may be offset by higher prices and more limited choice for disabled drivers and passengers."

But Linda Ling, chair of the Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle Converters Association (WAVCA) said all WAVCA members were "committed to safety testing the wheelchair securing system, seatbelts and new seats to stringent standards".

She said: "If we had not taken action, within a couple of years the only wheelchair passenger vehicles on the road would be expensive one-offs with no testing and no support from the main manufacturer."

Malcolm Harbour MEP, the EU rapporteur for the legislation, said the rules allowed for flexibility.

He said: "The whole package of regulation on the table can and will be amended if it needs to evolve."

Driving force: A Jubilee WAV

Virtual freedom

Disabled internet users want virtual personal assistants (PAs), medical check-ups and the ability to test drive adapted cars online, a survey has revealed.

The survey was commissioned by Directgov, the government website which acts as a gateway to public services in the UK.

More than 2,000 adults took part in the survey, of whom 312 were disabled.

One in eight disabled respondents said they would like to create a planner for journeys online, with accessibility mapped out according to their personal requirements.

Almost one in 10 would like to meet more people with their condition online, while other respondents said they would like to use the internet for job interviews, benefit claims meetings and to find information about whether specific shops and restaurants "comply" with the Disability Discrimination Act.

Rights 'going backwards'

Society needs a stronger human rights culture if equality is to be achieved, a conference was told.

The Human Rights Visions of Equality conference, hosted by the British Institute of Human Rights (BIHR), heard from a number of influential speakers, including Baroness (Jane) Campbell, broadcaster Jon Snow and human rights minister Baroness Ashton.

Baroness Campbell told the conference: "However much we are going forward, we are going backwards in many, many ways and that seems to take us away from a human rights culture.

"I want the Commission for Equality and Human Rights disability committee [which she will chair] to play a profounder role in responding to events, where we don't talk about it, we activate it," she said.

DN HACKED OFF

CATHY REAY

The bliss of a new job... and a proper chair

In the lowly days of cashier employment at Budgens supermarket (no offence to fans), when I would spend an average of four hours per sitting, two sittings a day, in the same cripplingly uncomfortable seat, I pretty much resigned myself to becoming a hunchback. Whenever I would get up to take a break, I would have to allow at least two minutes to physically stand up straight. By the end of the long, long, four years of employment, whenever I rose I might as well have collapsed; my nose practically touched the floor anyway.

Thanks to their minimalistic efforts in ensuring accessibility for all members of staff, I found that the box I had been given – literally, a cardboard box – to rest my feet on, was not what I, or my orthopaedist, had in mind.

As this is sadly the only long-term employment to which my resume can currently attest, I was concerned when I started my new job (in music marketing, get me) earlier this month that I would be treated with the same ignorance. Given that music is a field I'd like to pursue as a career, and that this job is actually nine-to-five, five days a week, I knew that if my employers were at all uncooperative I'd need to save now for all the hospital visits I'd have to take in 40 years' time.

To my great surprise/relief/excitement, on my first day I was presented with a thick Viking catalogue, told to write down what I needed, send it upstairs and there it would be, magically, on the doorstep the following morning. And it was. A proper chair (I cannot begin to explain the reclining pleasure) and a shiny new step (two levels and everything!), with additional equipment to follow if and when needed. The immediate effect was one of complete satisfaction; the long-term effect probably routed the disintegratory course my life would take down an entirely different path. The best part? Whenever we get heavy deliveries, all I have to do is press a button and the duty of collection gets passed onto someone else.

Unfortunately, now I've got back problems out of the way, it's probably time for me to start working on the other parts of my life that will no doubt make me pay later on. Namely saturated fat consumption, or perhaps my alarming addiction to Diet Coke. Or maybe just how long I seem to spend in that luxurious, reclining, well-cushioned chair. Ahhh…

Cathy Reay writes in *DN Extra* every month as part of our Hacked Off campaign to get more disabled people into journalism and stamp out their misrepresentation in the media.

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Reaching back to Africa

A group of disabled Africans in west London are not only supporting each other, but are sending aid to disabled people in one of Africa's most poverty-stricken regions, says Ray Bellisario

The second annual general meeting of a fledgling voluntary group dedicated to the plight of disabled immigrants to the UK took place last month in Acton, west London.

The Horn of Africa Disability and Elderly Association (HADEA) was established to help disabled people from Ethiopia, Eritrea, Djibouti and Somalia, who either now live in Britain or have disabled relatives in Africa in dire need of aid.

In this north-eastern shoulder of the African continent, disabled people face chronically poverty-stricken governments, a lack of medical treatment and equipment, and neglect through ignorance.

HADEA serves a growing population of Africans in west London – in Southall as well as Acton – where the needs of the community's disabled people are addressed.

The workers' efforts have been so successful that an affiliated group in Birmingham has been set up to carry on the good work in the Midlands.

The association organizes referrals to primary care trusts, social services and advice centres that assist in guidance on disability and welfare rights. Well-attended day centres encourage the broadening of knowledge of amenities and facilities available to everyone.

At the meeting, Ahmed Elmi from the Disabled Action Group, based in Birmingham, gave a harrowing description of the utter misery people suffer through the wanton neglect of disabled people in the Horn of Africa. He told of disabled people being unable to contribute to family income, being rejected by relatives and disowned.

Many disabled people fend for themselves in the only way they can and beg in the streets.

In these impoverished countries there is no protective welfare system, no hostel to provide shelter, no well-funded health service to ensure medical assistance, no state social service to issue essential mobility aids, protection or comfort.

There is no comparison between British society and the struggle for survival in the poverty-stricken Horn of Africa.

Ahmed described how, on a recent visit to the region, he witnessed appalling neglect. He saw disabled people in numerous towns abandoned on roads, sheltered from the elements by only a tree. They endure insufferable conditions and are the target of abuse and indignity – teased and attacked by an uneducated and spiteful public. Not many people show kindness and charity.

Now, HADEA and others like them have begun a programme of purchasing and sending to Africa wheelchairs, adjustable beds and other specialised equipment, and spare parts for repairs, as well as other sorely-needed aids and requirements.

Quietly, and in their traditionally respectful way, the now UK-based disabled Africans are contributing to and gathering much-needed aid for their countryfolk back home. They are not running a general appeal. Instead, through HADEA, they look to each other to help their kith and kin. Grateful for the generous kindness of Britain's welfare system, which they themselves receive, the disabled people here are doing their utmost for those less fortunate on the Horn of Africa.

HADEA is a shining example of how disabled people can help other disabled people. It will be interesting to see their future progress.

Ray Bellisario is a disabled, freelance photojournalist, and has specialized in third world issues

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DEADLINE – *Disability Now* August 2007 published 28 July. Classified deadlines: Booking: 13 July. Copy: 17 July.

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Applications to be received 22 July. Interviews and assessments are expected to be held between 28 August and 7 September.

For further information about the BBC Extend Scheme and how to apply, please visit **www.bbc.co.uk/jobs/extend**
If you do not have Internet access please call 0870 333 1330. Textphone 02890 328 478. Ceefax page 696.

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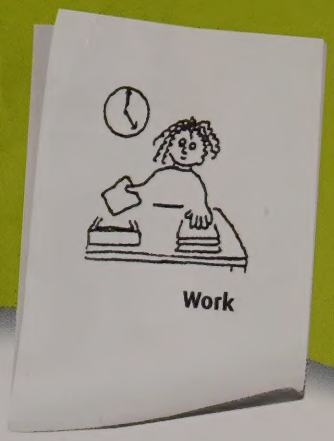

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Day Services Facilitators

Scale 3: £17,895 - £18,927 incl. LW (pay award pending)
Providing direct care and support to service users both in centres and the community, you'll organise individual and group activities that reflect either a person-centred plan or the users' aspirations. You'll also help with their intimate personal needs. Your background in this work means you understand the environment and are passionate about what you do. **Ref. ACS/106**

Receptionist Support Worker

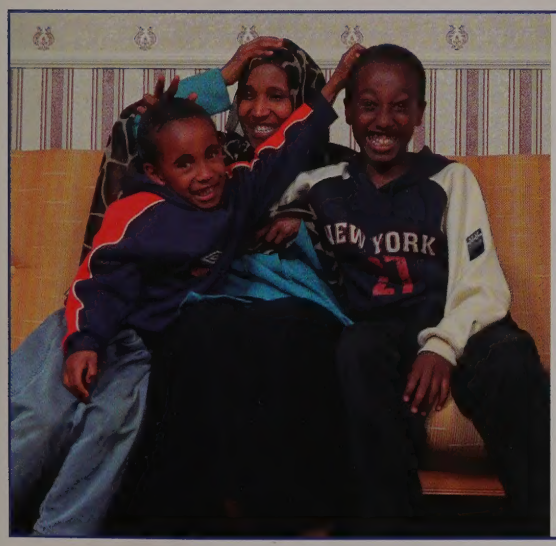
Part Time • Wednesday, Thursday, Friday
Scale 3: £17,895 - £18,927 pro rata incl. LW (pay award pending)
This is an unusual and interesting position at our busy community resource centre for people with Learning Disabilities. Not only will you be providing a positive first impression to visitors, you will also support and encourage service users to welcome guests themselves and help run the reception. It's a great role in which to develop the communication, care, computer and organisational skills that you bring to the post. **Ref. ACS/107**

For an application form, visit www.lambeth.gov.uk email Lambeth@wdad.co.uk or call 020 7926 7000 quoting the appropriate reference. Closing date: noon, Wednesday 25th July 2007.
Successful candidates will be asked to apply for an Enhanced Disclosure from the Criminal Records Bureau. Further information about the Disclosure can be found at www.disclosure.gov.uk and in the application pack. Lambeth aims for quality services and equal opportunities for all.

INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

www.lambeth.gov.uk

Lambeth



It's about people, not postcodes.

Southern Housing Group are going through an exciting restructure and are now recruiting for a variety of positions.

To find out more and to apply go to www.integrateshg.org.uk

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